INTRODUCTION

Among the new objects that attracted my attention during my stay in the United States, none struck my eye more vividly than the equality of conditions. I discovered without difficulty the enormous influence that this primary fact exerts on the course of society; it gives a certain direction to public spirit, a certain turn to the laws, new maxims to those who govern, and particular habits to the governed.

Soon I recognized that this same fact extends its influence well beyond political mores and laws, and that it gains no less dominion over civil society than over government: it creates opinions, gives birth to sentiments, suggests usages, and modifies everything it does not produce.

So, therefore, as I studied American society, more and more I saw in equality of conditions the generative fact from which each particular fact seemed to issue, and I found it before me constantly as a central point at which all my observations came to an end.

Then I brought my thinking back to our hemisphere, and it seemed to me I distinguished something in it analogous to the spectacle the New World offered me. I saw the equality of conditions that, without having reached its extreme limits as it had in the United States, was approaching them more each day; and the same democracy reigning in American societies appeared to me to be advancing rapidly toward power in Europe.

At that moment I conceived the idea of the book you are going to read.

A great democratic revolution is taking place among us: all see it, but all do not judge it in the same manner. Some consider it a new thing, and taking it for an accident, they still hope to be able to stop it; whereas others judge it irresistible because to them it seems the most continuous, the oldest, and the most permanent fact known in history.

For a moment I take myself back to what France was seven hundred years ago: I find it divided among a few families who possess the land and govern the inhabitants; at that time right of command passes from generation to generation by inheritance; men have only one means of acting upon one another—by force; only one origin of power is to be discovered—landed property.

But then the political power of the clergy comes to be founded and soon spreads. The clergy opens its ranks to all, to the poor and to the rich, to the commoner and to the lord; equality begins to penetrate through the church to the heart of government, and he who would have vegetated as a serf in eternal slavery takes his place as a priest in the midst of nobles, and will often take a seat above kings.

As society becomes in time more civilized and stable, the different relations among men become more complicated and numerous. The need for civil laws makes itself

keenly felt. Then jurists are born; they leave the dark precincts of the courts and the dusty recesses of the registries and go to sit at the court of the prince beside the feudal barons covered with ermine and mail.

The kings ruin themselves in great undertakings; the nobles exhaust themselves in private wars; the commoners enrich themselves in commerce. The influence of money begins to make itself felt in the affairs of the state. Trade becomes a new source opening the way to power, and financiers become a political power that is scorned and flattered.*1

Little by little enlightenment spreads; one sees the taste for literature and the arts awaken; then the mind becomes an element in success; science is a means of government, intelligence a social force; the lettered take a place in affairs.

Meanwhile, as new routes for coming to power are discovered, the value of birth is seen to decline. In the eleventh century, nobility had an inestimable price; in the thirteenth it is bought; the first ennobling takes place in 1270,†1 and equality is finally introduced into government by the aristocracy itself.

During the seven hundred years that have since elapsed, it sometimes happened that the nobles, in order to struggle against royal authority or to take power from their rivals, gave political power to the people.

Even more often one saw the kings have the lower classes of the state participate in the government in order to bring down the aristocracy.

In France, the kings showed themselves to be the most active and constant levelers. When they were ambitious and strong, they worked to elevate the people to the level of the nobles; and when they were moderate and weak, they permitted the people to be placed above themselves. Some aided democracy by their talents, others by their vices. Louis XI*2 and Louis XIV†2 took care to equalize everything beneath the throne, and finally Louis XV‡1 himself descended with his court into the dust.

As soon as citizens began to own land other than by feudal tenure, and transferable wealth was recognized, and could in its turn create influence and give power, discoveries in the arts could not be made, nor improvements in commerce and industry be introduced, without creating almost as many new elements of equality among men. From that moment on, all processes discovered, all needs that arise, all desires that demand satisfaction bring progress toward universal leveling. The taste for luxury, the love of war, the empire of fashion, the most superficial passions of the human heart as well as the most profound, seem to work in concert to impoverish the rich and enrich the poor.

Once works of the intellect had become sources of force and wealth, each development of science, each new piece of knowledge, each new idea had to be considered as a seed of power put within reach of the people. Poetry, eloquence, memory, the graces of the mind, the fires of the imagination, depth of thought, all the gifts that Heaven distributed haphazardly, profited democracy, and even if they were found in the possession of its adversaries, they still served its cause by putting into

relief the natural greatness of man; its conquests therefore spread with those of civilization and enlightenment, and literature was an arsenal open to all, from which the weak and the poor came each day to seek arms.

When one runs through the pages of our history, one finds so to speak no great events in seven hundred years that have not turned to the profit of equality.

The Crusades§1 and the wars with the English‖1 decimate the nobles and divide their lands; the institution of townships introduces democratic freedom into the heart of the feudal monarchy; the discovery of firearms#1 equalizes the villein and the noble on the battlefield; printing**1 offers equal resources to their intelligence; the mail comes to deposit enlightenment on the doorstep of the poor man's hut as at the portal of the palace; Protestantism asserts that all men are equally in a state to find the path to Heaven.*3 America, once discovered, presents a thousand new routes to fortune and delivers wealth and power to the obscure adventurer.

If you examine what is happening in France every fifty years from the eleventh century on, at the end of each of these periods you cannot fail to perceive that a double revolution has operated on the state of society. The noble has fallen on the social ladder, and the commoner has risen; the one descends, the other climbs. Each half century brings them nearer, and soon they are going to touch.

And this is not peculiar to France. In whichever direction we cast a glance, we perceive the same revolution continuing in all the Christian universe.

Everywhere the various incidents in the lives of peoples are seen to turn to the profit of democracy; all men have aided it by their efforts: those who had in view cooperating for its success and those who did not dream of serving it; those who fought for it and even those who declared themselves its enemies; all have been driven pell-mell on the same track, and all have worked in common, some despite themselves, others without knowing it, as blind instruments in the hands of God.

The gradual development of equality of conditions is therefore a providential fact, and it has the principal characteristics of one: it is universal, it is enduring, each day it escapes human power; all events, like all men, serve its development.

Would it be wise to believe that a social movement coming from so far can be suspended by the efforts of one generation? Does one think that after having destroyed feudalism and vanquished kings, democracy will recoil before the bourgeoisie and the rich? Will it be stopped now that it has become so strong and its adversaries so weak?

Where then are we going? No one can say; for we already lack terms for comparison: conditions are more equal among Christians in our day than they have ever been in any time or any country in the world; thus the greatness of what has already been done prevents us from foreseeing what can still be done.

The entire book that you are going to read was written under the pressure of a sort of religious terror in the author's soul, produced by the sight of this irresistible revolution that for so many centuries has marched over all obstacles, and that one sees still

advancing today amid the ruins it has made.

It is not necessary that God himself speak in order for us to discover sure signs of his will; it suffices to examine the usual course of nature and the continuous tendency of events; I know without the Creator's raising his voice that the stars follow the arcs in space that his finger has traced.

If long observation and sincere meditation led men in our day to recognize that the gradual and progressive development of equality is at the same time the past and the future of their history, this discovery alone would give that development the sacred character of the sovereign master's will. To wish to stop democracy would then appear to be to struggle against God himself, and it would only remain for nations to accommodate themselves to the social state that Providence imposes on them.

Christian peoples in our day appear to me to offer a frightening spectacle; the movement that carries them along is already strong enough that it cannot be suspended, and it is not yet rapid enough to despair of directing it: their fate is in their hands, but soon it will escape them.

To instruct democracy, if possible to reanimate its beliefs, to purify its mores, to regulate its movements, to substitute little by little the science of affairs for its inexperience, and knowledge of its true interests for its blind instincts; to adapt its government to time and place; to modify it according to circumstances and men: such is the first duty imposed on those who direct society in our day.

A new political science is needed for a world altogether new.

But that is what we hardly dream of: placed in the middle of a rapid river, we obstinately fix our eyes on some debris that we still perceive on the bank, while the current carries us away and takes us backward toward the abyss.

Among no people of Europe has the great social revolution I have just described made more rapid progress than among us; but here it has always proceeded haphazardly.

Never have heads of state thought at all to prepare for it in advance; it is made despite them or without their knowing it. The most powerful, most intelligent, and most moral classes of the nation have not sought to take hold of it so as to direct it. Democracy has therefore been abandoned to its savage instincts; it has grown up like those children who, deprived of paternal care, rear themselves in the streets of our towns and know only society's vices and miseries. One still seemed ignorant of its existence when it unexpectedly took power. Each then submitted with servility to its least desires; it was adored as the image of force; when afterwards it was weakened by its own excesses, legislators conceived the imprudent project of destroying it instead of seeking to instruct and correct it; and since they did not want to teach it to govern, they thought only of driving it from government.

As a result, the democratic revolution has taken place in the material of society without making the change in laws, ideas, habits, and mores that would have been necessary to make this revolution useful. Thus we have democracy without anything to

attenuate its vices and make its natural advantages emerge; and while we already see the evils it brings, we are still ignorant of the goods it can bestow.

When royal power, leaning on the aristocracy, peacefully governed the peoples of Europe, society, amid its miseries, enjoyed several kinds of happiness one can conceive and appreciate only with difficulty in our day.

The power of some subjects raised insurmountable barriers against the tyranny of the prince; moreover, the kings, feeling themselves vested in the eyes of the crowd with an almost divine character, drew from the very respect they generated the will not to abuse their power.

The nobles, placed at an immense distance from the people, nevertheless took the sort of benevolent and tranquil interest in the lot of the people that the shepherd accords to his flock; and without seeing in the poor man their equal, they watched over his destiny as a trust placed by Providence in their hands.

The people, not having conceived the idea of a social state other than their own nor imagining that they could ever be equal to their chiefs, received their benefits and did not discuss their rights. They loved their chiefs when the chiefs were lenient and just, and they submitted to their rigors without trouble and without baseness, as they would to inevitable evils sent by the arm of God. Moreover, usage and mores had established boundaries for tyranny and had founded a sort of right in the very midst of force.

As the noble had no thought that anyone wanted to wrest from him privileges that he believed legitimate, and the serf regarded his inferiority as an effect of the immutable order of nature, one conceives a sort of reciprocal benevolence that could have been established between two classes sharing such different fates. One would see inequality and misery in society at that time, but souls were not degraded.

It is not the use of power or the habit of obedience that depraves men, but the use of power that they consider illegitimate, and obedience to a power they regard as usurped and oppressive.

On one side were [material] goods, force, leisure, and with these, pursuits of luxury, refinements of taste, pleasures of the mind, and cultivation of the arts; on the other side, work, coarseness, and ignorance.

But in the hearts of this ignorant and coarse crowd were energetic passions, generous sentiments, profound beliefs, and savage virtues.

Thus organized, the social body could have stability, power, and above all, glory.

But now ranks are confused; the barriers raised among men are lowered; estates are divided, power is partitioned, enlightenment spreads, intelligence is equalized; the social state becomes democratic, and finally the empire of democracy is peacefully established over institutions and mores.

I conceive a society, then, which all, regarding the law as their work, would love and submit to without trouble; in which the authority of government is respected as necessary, not divine, and the love one would bear for a head of state would not be a

passion, but a reasoned and tranquil sentiment. Each having rights and being assured of preserving his rights, a manly confidence and a sort of reciprocal condescension between the classes would be established, as far from haughtiness as from baseness.

The people, instructed in their true interests, would understand that to profit from society's benefits, one must submit to its burdens. The free association of citizens could then replace the individual power of nobles, and the state would be sheltered from both tyranny and license.

I understand that in a democratic state constituted in this manner, society will not be immobile; but the movements of the social body can be regular and progressive; if one encounters less brilliance than within an aristocracy, one will find less misery; enjoyments will be less extreme and well-being more general; sciences less great and ignorance rarer; sentiments less energetic and habits milder; one will note more vices and fewer crimes.

In the absence of enthusiasm and ardent beliefs, enlightenment and experience will sometimes obtain great sacrifices from citizens; each man, equally weak, will feel an equal need of those like him; and knowing that he can obtain their support only on condition of his lending them his cooperation, he will discover without difficulty that his particular interest merges with the general interest.

The nation, taken as a body, will be less brilliant, less glorious, less strong, perhaps; but the majority of its citizens will enjoy a more prosperous lot, and the people will show themselves to be peaceful, not because they despair of being better-off, but because they know how to be well-off.

If everything were not good and useful in an order of things like this, society would at least have appropriated all the useful and good that it can present; and men, abandoning forever the social advantages that aristocracy can furnish, would have taken from democracy all the goods it can offer them.

But we, leaving the social state of our forebears, throwing their institutions, their ideas, and their mores pell-mell behind us—what have we gained in its place?

The prestige of royal power has vanished without being replaced by the majesty of the laws; in our day the people scorn authority, but they fear it, and fear extracts more from them than was formerly given out of respect and love.

I perceive that we have destroyed the individual entities that were able to struggle separately against tyranny; but I see that it is government alone that inherits all the prerogatives extracted from families, from corporations, or from men: the force of a small number of citizens, sometimes oppressive, but often protective, has therefore been succeeded by the weakness of all.

The division of fortunes has diminished the distance separating the poor from the rich; but in coming closer they seem to have found new reasons for hating each other, and casting glances full of terror and envy, they mutually repel each other from power; for the one as for the other, the idea of rights does not exist, and force appears to both as the sole argument in the present and the only guarantee of the future.

The poor man has kept most of the prejudices of his fathers without their beliefs; their ignorance without their virtues; he has taken the doctrine of interest as the rule of his actions without knowing the science of it, and his selfishness is as lacking in enlightenment as was formerly his devotion.

Society is tranquil not because it is conscious of its force and well-being, but on the contrary, because it believes itself weak and infirm; it fears it will die if it makes an effort: each feels the ill, but no one has the courage and energy needed to seek something better; like the passions of old men that end only in impotence, desires, regrets, sorrows, and joys produce nothing visible or lasting.

Thus we have abandoned what goods our former state could present without acquiring what useful things the current state could offer; we have destroyed an aristocratic society, and having stopped complacently amid the debris of the former edifice, we seem to want to settle there forever.

What is happening in the intellectual world is no less deplorable.

Hindered in its advance or abandoned without any support against its disordered passions, French democracy has overturned all that it has encountered in its way, shaking whatever it has not destroyed. We did not see it as it took hold of society little by little so as to establish its empire peacefully; it has not ceased its advance in the midst of the disorders and agitation of combat. Animated by the heat of the struggle, pushed beyond the natural limits of his opinion by the opinions and excesses of his adversaries, each loses sight of the very object of his pursuits and takes up a language that corresponds poorly to his true sentiments and secret instincts.

Hence the strange confusion we are forced to witness.

I search my memories in vain, and I find nothing that should evoke more sadness and more pity than what is passing before our eyes; it seems that in our day the natural bond that unites opinions to tastes and actions to beliefs has been broken; the sympathy that has been noticeable in all times between the sentiments and ideas of men appears destroyed; one would say that all the laws of moral analogy have been abolished.

One still encounters Christians among us, full of zeal, whose religious souls love to nourish themselves from the truths of the other life; doubtless they are going to be moved to favor human freedom, the source of all moral greatness. Christianity, which has rendered all men equal before God, will not be loath to see all citizens equal before the law. But by a strange concurrence of events, religion finds itself enlisted for the moment among the powers democracy is overturning, and it is often brought to reject the equality it loves and to curse freedom as an adversary, whereas by taking it by the hand, it could sanctify its efforts.

Alongside these men of religion I discover others whose regard is turned toward earth rather than Heaven; partisans of freedom not only because they see in it the origin of the noblest virtues, but above all because they consider it the source of the greatest goods, they sincerely desire to assure its empire and to have men taste its benefits: I

understand that they are going to hasten to call religion to their aid, for they must know that the reign of freedom cannot be established without that of mores, nor mores founded without beliefs; but they have perceived religion in the ranks of their adversaries, and this is enough for them: some attack it, and others do not dare to defend it.

Past centuries have seen base and venal souls extol slavery, while independent minds and generous hearts were struggling without hope to save human freedom. But in our day one often encounters naturally noble and proud men whose opinions are in direct opposition to their tastes, and who vaunt the servility and baseness they have never known for themselves. There are others, on the contrary, who speak of freedom as if they could feel what is holy and great in it, and who noisily claim for humanity the rights they have always misunderstood.

I perceive virtuous and peaceful men whose pure mores, tranquil habits, ease, and enlightenment naturally place them at the head of the populations that surround them. Full of a sincere love of their native country, they are ready to make great sacrifices for it: nevertheless they are often found to be adversaries of civilization; they confuse its abuses with its benefits, and in their minds the idea of evil is indissolubly united with the idea of the new.

Nearby I see others who, in the name of progress, striving to make man into matter, want to find the useful without occupying themselves with the just, to find science far from beliefs, and well-being separated from virtue: these persons are said to be the champions of modern civilization, and they insolently put themselves at its head, usurping a place that has been abandoned to them, but from which they are held off by their unworthiness.

Where are we then?

Men of religion combat freedom, and the friends of freedom attack religions; noble and generous spirits vaunt slavery, and base and servile souls extol independence; honest and enlightened citizens are enemies of all progress, while men without patriotism and morality make themselves apostles of civilization and enlightenment!

Have all centuries, then, resembled ours? Has man, as in our day, always had before his eyes a world where nothing is linked, where virtue is without genius and genius without honor; where love of order is confused with a taste for tyrants and the holy cult of freedom with contempt for laws; where conscience casts only a dubious light on human actions; where nothing seems any longer to be forbidden or permitted, or honest or shameful, or true or false?

Shall I think that the Creator has made man so as to leave him to debate endlessly in the midst of the intellectual miseries that surround us? I cannot believe this: God prepares a firmer and calmer future for European societies; I am ignorant of his designs, but I will not cease to believe in them [merely] because I cannot penetrate them, and I would rather doubt my enlightenment than his justice.

There is one country in the world where the great social revolution I am speaking of

seems nearly to have attained its natural limits; there it has operated in a simple and easy manner, or rather one can say that this country sees the results of the democratic revolution operating among us without having had the revolution itself.

The emigrants who came to settle in America at the beginning of the seventeenth century in some fashion disengaged the democratic principle from all those against which it struggled within the old societies of Europe, and they transplanted it alone on the shores of the New World. There it could grow in freedom, and advancing along with mores, develop peacefully in laws.

It appears to me beyond doubt that sooner or later we shall arrive, like the Americans, at an almost complete equality of conditions. I do not conclude from this that we are destined one day necessarily to draw the political consequences the Americans have drawn from a similar social state. I am very far from believing that they have found the only form of government that democracy can give itself; but it is enough that in the two countries the generative cause of laws and mores be the same, for us to have an immense interest in knowing what it has produced in each of them.

Therefore it is not only to satisfy a curiosity, otherwise legitimate, that I have examined America; I wanted to find lessons there from which we could profit. One would be strangely mistaken to think that I wanted to make a panegyric; whoever reads this book will be well convinced that such was not my design; nor was my goal to advocate such a form of government in general; for I number among those who believe that there is almost never any absolute good in the laws; I have not even claimed to judge whether the social revolution, whose advance seems to me irresistible, was advantageous or fatal to humanity; I have accepted this revolution as an accomplished fact or one about to be accomplished; and among the peoples who have seen it operating in their midst, I have sought the one in whom it has attained the most complete and peaceful development, in order to discern clearly its natural consequences, and to perceive, if possible, the means of rendering it profitable to men. I confess that in America I saw more than America; I sought there an image of democracy itself, of its penchants, its character, its prejudices, its passions; I wanted to become acquainted with it if only to know at least what we ought to hope or fear from it.

In the first part of this work I have therefore tried to show the direction that democracy, left in America to its penchants and abandoned almost without restraint to its instincts, has naturally given to the laws, the course it has imposed on the government, and in general, the power it has obtained over affairs. I wanted to know what have been the goods and ills produced by it. I searched for the precautions the Americans had made use of to direct it, and others they had omitted, and I undertook to distinguish the causes that permit it to govern society.

My goal was, in a second part, to paint the influence that equality of conditions and government by democracy in America exert on civil society, on habits, ideas, and mores; but I am beginning to feel less ardent to achieve this design. Before I could

provide for the task I had proposed for myself, my work will have become almost useless. Another will soon show readers the principal features of the American character, and hiding the gravity of the portraits under a light veil, lend to truth charms with which I would not be able to adorn it.1

I do not know if I have succeeded in making known what I saw in America, but I am sure of sincerely having had the desire to do so and of never having knowingly succumbed to the need to adapt facts to ideas instead of submitting ideas to the facts.

When a point could be established with the aid of written documents, I took care to recur to original texts and to the most authentic and esteemed works.2 I have indicated my sources in notes, and everyone can verify them. When it was a question of opinions, political usages, or observations of mores I sought the most enlightened men to consult. If it happened that the thing was important or dubious, I did not content myself with one witness, but made my determination only on the basis of all the testimonies together.

Here the reader must necessarily take me at my word. Often I could have cited as support for what I advance the authority of names known to him, or at least worthy of being known; but I have kept myself from doing so. The stranger often learns important truths in the home of his host that the latter would perhaps conceal from a friend; with a stranger one is relieved of obligatory silence; one does not fear his indiscretion because he is passing through. I recorded each of these confidences as soon as I received it, but they will never leave my portfolio;*4 I would rather diminish the success of my account than add my name to the list of those travelers who send back sorrows and embarrassments in return for the generous hospitality they have received.

I know that, despite my care, nothing will be easier than to criticize this book if anyone ever thinks of criticizing it.

I think those who want to regard it closely will find, in the entire work, a mother thought that so to speak links all its parts. But the diversity of the objects I had to treat is very great, and whoever undertakes to oppose an isolated fact to the sum of facts I cite or a detached idea to the sum of ideas will succeed without difficulty. I should therefore wish that one do me the favor of reading me in the same spirit that presided over my work, and that one judge this book by the general impression it leaves, just as I myself decided, not by such and such a reason, but by the mass of reasons.

Nor must it be forgotten that the author who wants to make himself understood is obliged to push each of his ideas to all its theoretical consequences and often to the limits of the false and impractical; for if it is sometimes necessary to deviate from the rules of logic in actions, one cannot do so in discourse, and a man finds it almost as difficult to be inconsistent in his words as he does ordinarily to be consistent in his actions.

I end by pointing out myself what a great number of readers will consider the capital defect in the work. This book is not precisely in anyone's camp; in writing it I did not mean either to serve or to contest any party; I undertook to see, not differently, but further than the parties; and while they are occupied with the next day, I wanted to

ponder the future.

58. For Story's sour appreciation of AT's use of his work in *DA*, see Pierson, *Tocqueville in America*, 730–732.

59. In the following analysis, the editors do not attempt to come to terms with the vast literature on the book, though we do touch on many of its topics and themes. See the list of suggested readings.

60. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1278b10–15, 1279a28.

61. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, I 2.

62. What had once been taken for mere benevolence to fellow humans—*humani generis similitudo*—now acquires an egalitarian political significance for fellow citizens; Cicero, *Laws* I 31.

63. See Manent, *Tocqueville and the Nature of Democracy*, 48.

64. But see AT's reference to past civilization in *DA* I 1.1.

65. AT, *The Old Regime*, I 5, II 5, marvelously prefigured twenty years earlier in the essay AT had written for John Stuart Mill: "Social and Political Condition of France," in *OC* 2.1: 65.

66. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1302a16–1303b18, 1316a15–22.

67. In the margin, AT notes: "New despotism. It is in the portrayal of this that resides all the originality and depth of my idea. What I wrote in my first work was hackneyed and superficial." Cited in Jean-Claude Lamberti, "Two Ways of Conceiving the Republic," in Masugi, *Interpreting Tocqueville's "Democracy in America,"* 18.

68. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1281a14–24; see also Plato, *Republic*, 564a.

69. The term "tyranny of the majority" is used in I 2.4, 2.7 (4 times), 2.8. "Despotism of the majority" is used in I 1.8, 2.7, 2.9. The "omnipotence" of the people or the majority is mentioned in I 1.8, 2 (beginning), 2.4, 2.7 (8 times).

70. In a letter to his friend Arthur de Gobineau, November 17, 1853 (*Selected Letters*, 297–301; *OC* 9: 201–204), AT criticizes the racialist theories of Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853) as "very probably false and very certainly pernicious."

71. Robert Bellah has made Tocqueville's phrase current; see Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1985).

72. *DA* I 2.10, II 4.4, 4.6; *The Old Regime* III 1, 8.

73. For a similar attack on historians of the French Revolution of 1848, see *Recollections of Alexis de Tocqueville*, 67–75; *OC* 12: 83–89.

74. Rousseau's Savoyard Vicar refers to God as the *Etre immense; Emile*, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*, 5 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, Pléiade ed., 1959–1995), 4: 592. See also Descartes' description of God as "Immense, incomprehensible and infinite" in *Meditations* IV. Our thanks to Terence Marshall for these references. Tocqueville himself also uses the term in describing the pantheistic conception of the whole, which incorporates all of creation and the Creator himself (*DA* II 1.7).

75. While arguing in the Chamber of Deputies for the abolition of slavery in the French colonies, AT reminded his colleagues that the idea of freedom and therefore the "great idea [of abolition] is not only your property, it is not only among the mother ideas of your Revolution, but it lives or it dies in your hearts, depending on whether one sees living or reborn there all the elevated sentiments, all the noble instincts that your Revolution developed, those noble instincts by which you have done everything great that you have accomplished in the world and without which, I do not fear to say, you will do nothing and you will be nothing." "Intervention dans la discussion de la loi sur le régime des esclaves dans les colonies," in *OC* 3.1: 125–126.

76. For an emphatic restatement of this point, see *The Old Regime*, Preface, 86–89; *OC* 2.1: 73–76.

77. Letter to Louis de Kergorlay, June 29, 1831, *Selected Letters*, 47; *OC* 13.1: 225–238.

A NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

1. Letter to Henry Reeve, October 15, 1839; *OC* 6.1: 48.

VOLUME ONE

INTRODUCTION

*1 In this sentence, AT uses two different words for "power," *pouvoir* and *puissance*. *Puissance*, used in the

first instance, has a connotation of physical strength; *pouvoir*, of formal authority as well as capacity.

†1 Louis IX (d. 1270) first asserted the exclusive right of the king to confer knighthood; Philip IV issued the first "letter of ennoblement" in about 1290.

*2 King of France, 1461–1483.

†2 King of France, 1643–1715.

‡1 King of France, 1715–1774.

§1 1095–1291.

‖1 The Hundred Years' War, 1337–1453.

#1 Firearms were developed in the fourteenth century.

**1 The printing press was invented around 1450.

*3 Martin Luther published his 95 Theses in 1517.

1. At the time I published the first edition of this work, M. Gustave de Beaumont [1802–1866], my traveling companion in America, was still working on his book, entitled *Marie: or, Slavery in the United States*, which has since appeared [published in 1835 as *Marie; ou, L'esclavage aux Etats-Unis: Tableau de moeurs américaines*, in the form of a novel with extensive notes and appendices]. Beaumont's principal goal was to put into relief and make known the situation of Negroes in the midst of Anglo-American society. His work will throw a vivid new light on the question of slavery, a vital question for the united republics. I do not know if I am mistaken, but it seems to me that Beaumont's book, after having keenly interested those who want to draw on its emotion and to find portraits there, will attain a still more solid and lasting success among readers who first of all desire real insights and profound truths.

*4 Some of these confidences did leave AT's portfolio after his death. His travel notebooks have been published under the title *Journey to America*.

2. Legislative and administrative documents were furnished to me with a kindness whose memory still prompts my gratitude. Among the American officials who thus favored my researches I shall cite above all Mr. Edward Livingston [1764–1836], then Secretary of State [under Andrew Jackson, 1831–1833] (now Minister Plenipotentiary at Paris [1833–1835]). During my visit to Congress, Mr. Livingston was very willing to hand over to me most of the documents I possess relative to the federal government. Mr. Livingston is one of those rare men whom one likes from having read their writings, whom one admires and honors even before having met them, and to whom one is happy to owe gratitude. [As a member of the state legislature of Louisiana, Livingston wrote his *Civil Code of the State of Louisiana* (1825); although not adopted by the legislature, it gained wide influence in Europe and the United States.]

PART ONE